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(Washington, DC) -- More than 100 YouthBuild AmeriCorps students and graduates from across the country including St. Louis, MO marked YouthBuild's 30th anniversary by building an energy-efficient, affordable home on the National Mall and meeting with special guests including First Lady Michelle Obama and Congressman Russ Carnahan (MO-03).

Congressman Carnahan met with students from Operation Excel YouthBuild located in North St. Louis County while they helped to build a home for Merary Rios, a single mother of three children whose house was damaged last year by Hurricane Dolly.

President Barack Obama has proposed expanding YouthBuild from 8,000 to 50,000 young people annually as part of his national service platform, and \$50 million for the federal YouthBuild program was included in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act supported by Carnahan and signed into law by President Obama.

The \$50 million included in the Recovery Act, combined with FY'09 appropriation of \$70 million, will allow the Department of Labor to fund approximately 200 local organizations, compared to only 107 funded in the 2007 competition.

These local non-profit community-based and public agencies collectively employ about 2,000 teachers, counselors, construction supervisors, accountants, and administrators and they will employ approximately 8,000 low-income young adults in constructing or greening affordable housing in their own struggling communities while they also work toward their GED or high school diploma.

To meet President Obama and Congressman Carnahan's call to create "green-collar" jobs, YouthBuild programs increasingly teach building techniques to protect the environment and to make YouthBuild graduates more competitive in the budding field of environmentally responsible construction.

"The benefits of giving disadvantaged youth the opportunity to give back to their communities are exponential," Carnahan said. "Students participating in YouthBuild not only help those in need -- they learn valuable skills, make valuable contributions to a new 'green' economy and get their lives back on track."

"For 30 years, YouthBuild students have been rebuilding their own lives and their communities," said Dorothy Stoneman, president and founder of YouthBuild USA, the national nonprofit that is the support center for local YouthBuild programs. "Our goal moving forward is to open the doors of YouthBuild to engage 50,000 highly disadvantaged young adults who are out of school and out of work -- and who want a second chance. By doing so, we will begin to break the cycle of poverty in this country."

In YouthBuild programs nationwide, low-income youth ages 16-24 work toward their GEDs or high school diplomas while learning job skills by building affordable housing for homeless and poor people. About 90 percent of YouthBuild students have quit high school, and 40 percent have been through the court system. In 30 years, 84,000 students have built 18,000 units of affordable housing and have transformed their lives and communities.

Later this week, the House is considering the Generations Invigorating Volunteerism and Education (GIVE) Act. In addition to creating 175,000 additional service opportunities the bill establishes four new service corps to address key needs in low income communities including the Clean Energy Corps to encourage energy efficiency and conservation measures.

Congressman Carnahan co-founded and co-chairs the Congressional High Performance Buildings Caucus. Through a new and more sustainable approach to designing, constructing, and operating new buildings and retrofitting and operating older buildings, Congress can address and reduce the numerous and varied environmental, climate, health, and economic impacts that result from homes and buildings.